IJRAR.ORG E-ISSN: 2348-1269, P-ISSN: 2349-5138
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND ANALYTICAL REVIEWS (IJRAR) | IJRAR.ORG
An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

BEYOND THE BOUNDARY

Influence of Indian culture on Japanese anime

[1]Anubhav Anand [2] Dr. Ajay Kumar
[1] Research Fellow [2] Assistant Professor
[1] Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
[1] Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, India

Abstract
The role of media is phenomenal is developing perception of a foreign culture. Indian culture and mythology have continued to inspire artists for generations, yet a proper representation is hitherto uncommon. Anime is one of the very few mediums which has been veracious while depicting Indian culture. There has scarcely been research about the influence of Indian culture in non-Western creative media. With ample examples, this article demonstrates how various aspects of Indian culture have been a muse to anime and manga artists. Further, the article compares and contrasts the portrayal of Indian culture with the popular Western media. Hegemony vs Inclusivity in the global creative media is emphasized taking Indian culture in the context.
Keywords
anime, Indian culture, media hegemony, Indian mythology, cultural imperialism, symbolism

Introduction: India and (Pop) Culture

India, through its vivid culture and mythology, has often been a part of pop culture. Although films, video games and other forms of media have represented the Indian culture with creative liberties, the manga/anime subculture of Japan takes the cake for most frequent use of Indian traditions and mythology. An anime taking place in Indian "setting" is relatively rare and most of the anime make use of direct and indirect characterization.

Bollywood has influenced Japanese artists to such an extent that they include subtle references in their own works. The character of Amitabh Kapoor from *Darker than Black* is a nod to the Indian Film industry[1] (Bollywood). The first name of the character is a reference to "Amitabh Bachchan", who is regarded as one of the most influential actors of Bollywood, whereas the surname is based on "Kapoor family", the first family of Indian Cinema with descendants from multiple generations being part of the Indian film industry (Jain). An actor takes on various roles throughout his/her career. *Darker than Black* with its supernatural elements, makes use of the abilities of Amitabh Kapoor to take on various persona as a homage to film industry. Another instance of an anime character being named after a Bollywood celebrity is Aishwarya Rai (Curly) from *Digimon Tamers*. She is an Indian member of the international group of programmers known as "Monster Makers", who are responsible for the creation of artificial life forms (Digimon). Her character is named after the Bollywood actress "Aishwarya Rai Bachchan". *Gamers* copies iconic scene of acclaimed Indian film *3 idiots*. In the final episode of the series, when the protagonist reminisces his journey to the finals in the gaming tournament, he (and his friends) is sitting on arse-shaped chair akin to the pose found in *3 Idiots*' poster and the song "Aal Izz Well". The phrase shouted by the friends in "Gamers" is the Japanese title of the film (きっと、うまくいく) and means "It will work out" (Kitto, Umaku Iku) in the context of the anime. Japan portrays India in a much better scenario a cut above Hollywood ever does. Hollywood films in most of the cases portray the Indian subcontinent through yellow tinted lens which signifies unhygienic, poor, and dirty regions. *Extraction* (2020) uses natural/blue tint for Australia and yellowish for Indian regions. The image of India as a place of overly melodramatic soap operas and land of snake charmers is still a cliché in popular culture. Indian characters in western drama often serve as comic relief. 21st century India is much different from what is portrayed in the western media. Japanese anime do not stick to the stereotypes and use creativity in a much larger context.

Conjunction of the Real and the Virtual

The versatility of anime as a medium in context of setting, provides it an edge over other forms of traditional media. Anime can make use of historical settings, fantasy ones and a transition in between in accordance with the plot. The kingdom of "Sindhura" in *Arslan Senki* is a kingdom with warm climate, which lies to southeast of Pars (ancient Persia). West to Uraiyur (Sindhura's capital) lies the Gujarat fortress, which is based on the Indian state of Gujarat. In the anime, the fortress is located near arid regions and forest area, just like the topography of the Gujarat state. The modern state of Gujarat shares its borders with the Sindh province, which is now situated in Pakistan. The anime version of Sindhura set in ancient Indian subcontinent provides historical justice even in modern times. At the eastern border of Pars and Sindura is Peshawar fortress, which is also positioned according to historical accuracy. Even the depiction of Peshawar in Arslan Senki is geographically similar to the city of Peshawar in Pakistan. The Peshawar fortress in Arslan Senki is considered impregnable for being surrounded by mountains just like its modern-day counterpart.

Direct adaptations of stories set in India has been the anime trend when compared to new and original setting. Albeit it is easier, doing justice to the source material while making an adaptation can be challenging. *The Jungle Book*, an adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's collection of stories, is set in a forest in India. The region "Seoni" (spelt Seeonee during the British colonial regime), which is situated in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, has often been recounted in the story. Madhya Pradesh is famous for its forests in India. It is also a home to a large number of national parks and nature reserves. *The Jungle Book* vividly represents the flora and fauna of the region through its setting and characters. Anime as a medium is apt for such an anthropomorphic design. The influence of Indian culture on anime is more profound in case of adaptation of ancient epics. The first Indian epic, *Ramayana*, has proved to be quite influential for Japanese culture. In 1992, it was adapted into an anime film "Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama" by the Japanese film director Yugo Sako. The epic is set in the kingdom of Ayodhaya, Mithila and Lanka. Ayodhya is a city in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India. It is believed to be birthplace of Rama. *Ramayana* tells the story of Rama as he grows from a prince of Ayodhya to its King, spanning several years filled with adventures. Sita is the daughter of King Janaka (king of Mithila), who gets married to prince Rama (Buck). Present day Mithila is a region of the Indian subcontinent expanding over the Indian states of Bihar and Jharkhand, and some parts of Nepal. The anime has beautifully adapted the whole tale including regions like Kishkindha, which is situated in present-day Vijaynagara, a district in India famous for UNESCO world heritage sites.

Osamu Tezuka's manga "Buddha" is a significant work from the perspective of influence on another culture. Winner of Eisner Awards under the category U.S Edition of International Material (2004-05), it recounts the life of Gautama Buddha with some creative modifications by Tezuka. The series got adapted into two anime films – *Buddha: The Great Departure* and *Buddha 2: The Endless Journey*. It has also become a staple text in Buddhist temples for young adults and teens to learn about the Buddha's life. The story is set in ancient India, particularly in present-day Northern India and Southern-Nepal, within the kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala (Rama's kingdom during Ramayana timeline). *Buddha* tells the story of Siddhartha Gautama, the prince of Shakya clan (Greater Magadha), as he grows from a prince to the enlightened one. The anime/manga medium depicting the journey of Buddhism's founder is important both from spiritual and cultural perspective. As it is set in India, other cultural issues like casteism are also emphasized. The death of Chapra (original fictional character) at the hands of Kosalan soldiers when his birth in lower caste is revealed critically hints to the social injustice prevalent in ancient India due to casteism. The setting in this case helps to explore various cultural and religious beliefs, and critically examine the society. Despite the art style being that of a typical Japanese Shonen, the themes explored are universal with a cultural representation beyond the boundary.

More than Namaste

Namaste is a form of greeting frequent in the Indian subcontinent, which literally means "I bow to thee". This single phrase has gained popularity as yoga became commercially popular in North America and Western Europe. It has become a cliché in popular culture, which is clearly evident from its usage in Hollywood films and soap operas.

"American media are shaping the cultures and identities of other nations. American styles in fashion and food, as well as media fare, dominate the global market - a process known as cultural imperialism. Today, many international observers contend that the idea of consumer control or input is even more remote in countries inundated by American movies, music, television, and images of beauty." (Campbell, Martin and Fabos 468)

Whenever a western character is portrayed in oriental setting or confronts an Indian character in the west, a 'Namaste' ensues. In most of the cases anything more about the Indian culture in not mentioned or conveyed

in subtle manner. Anime, on the other hand, has been quite successful in representing Indian culture within specific context(s).

Indian cuisine is famous for its distinctive spicy flavour, but Hollywood films rarely mention anything other than curry and usually skip the details like ingredients, recipe, and texture. Curry is used in context of a comic relief just like the hackneyed Indian characters. Anime also makes use of Indian characters and curry as a comic relief in many cases, but the representation expands further beyond. The typical IT service guy and software engineer trope is kind of non-existent in case of anime. In this medium, Indian characters have been portrayed as being employed in different sectors. The representation of these characters ranges from royalty, butler, scientist, warrior, R&D head, astronaut, athlete, to cook, and store owner.

Japanese anime has subtly represented the cultural significance of food through series like *Food Wars*. Numerous Indian dishes are mentioned throughout the series with detailed explanation of ingredients and cooking methods. Some of the most popular dishes depicted in the series are - Kozhi Varutha Curry, Kofta Kebab Burger, Odourless Fried Rice, Naan Pot Pie Curry, Goa Fish Curry and Five Kinds of Curry Soup. Moreover, Indian spices and other ingredients have been shown to be used in other kinds of dishes as well. Leach () describes food as an appropriate mediator; when consumed, it establishes a direct identity with the consumer. The food goes beyond the role of materialistic satiation and develops into a symbol of cultural significance. In *Anohana*, Hisakawa recounts his visit to India and tells his friends about the food he consumed during his stay. He serves everyone a hot beverage and introduces it as an Indian spiced tea - Masala Chai. He also cooks Kheer explaining it as a sweet dish of boiled rice with milk. Menma comments on its texture being similar to vomit. As she consumed kheer, Naruko Anjou exclaims “It’s surprisingly good. It’s something like a dessert...”. It serves as a beautiful representation of cuisine appreciation through cultural tourism in the context of the anime.

Traditional clothes provide substantial information related to any culture or society. Every culture has some distinguished clothing, called “Vastra” in Sanskrit, which is paradigmatic of that culture. Anime, through the fabrics of culture, represent the influence of Indian tradition in Japan. Although Indian characters have been attired in traditional Indian clothing, many non-Indian characters have also been treated the same aesthetically to demonstrate the cultural appreciation through works of art. The female characters are often depicted draped in sari, flashing bangles in arms, and sporting bindi on forehead. Eclair (Fairy Tail), Mina (Black Butler) and Urmina (D.Gray-man) serve as common example of such aesthetic representation of culture. The cover of chapter 111 of *Rent-A-Girlfriend* portraying the female protagonist “Chizuru Mizuhara” rocking the Indian attire and striking a namaste pose, serves as another instance of anime and manga sub-culture being inspired by the Indian culture. Soma Asman Kadar and Agni (Black Butler), Hakim Atwari (Emma), and Ram Das (Princess Sarah) are presented in anime wearing sherwani, churidars and turban which are some cultural attires frequented by Indian men. Ganishka and Silat (Berserk), adorn the armour-clad attire of Rajput warriors due to high fantasy setting. Silat also uses many Indian weapons used by Rajput warriors like talwar, chakram and aara. All these weapons are associated with the Indian martial art Kalaripayattu, Silat is said to be trained in the same martial art. *Kenichi: The Mightiest Disciple* goes in details about the use of Kalaripayattu, its origin and the various stances and techniques of this ancient martial art. Several characters like Cyril Rahman, Sho Kano and Ethan Stanley are the most notable practitioners of Kalaripayattu in the series. *Shakunetsu Kabaddi* is another nod from Japanese artists as a cultural appreciation for Indian sports. The whole anime is about the game of Kabaddi and successfully manages to capture the representation of a south-Asian team sport over hegemonic representation of western sports like football in anime and other mediums. Thompson (617-622) argues over the sociology of sport being dominated by western countries and despite having a sound economy, countries like Japan are not able to overcome this scenario mostly due to linguistic imperialism; he further comments how the eastern martial arts have lost their original value and been distorted due to contact with the modern West. Anime as a medium is narrowing this gap as compared to other western media. Through the inclusion of other languages in their works, Japanese artists are trying to diversify the content as well as show appreciation for other eastern cultures. This form of appreciation is not only limited to the dubs but also includes other implicit references. The theme song of Orochimaru (Naruto) comprises of Indian lyrics, whereas, in *Tekkonkinkreet* words are scribbled throughout the walls in Hindi. Anime also show equal appreciation for the western languages and cultures but the focus is shifting towards underappreciated cultures.

Legends Never Die: Indian Mythology in Anime

Indian spirituality and mythology have been deeply influential to Japanese culture as Buddhism originated in India. Hindu Symbolism is also a growing trend in creative industries. *Naruto* draws heavily from spirituality and amazing mythological lore of India, China, and Japan, itself. The concept of Chakra, the main force or power behind ninjutsu comes from the Hindu concept of chakra as various (energy) focal points used in a

variety of ancient meditation practices, collectively denominated as Tantra. Seven chakra points clearly influenced Kishimoto as the eight gates in *Naruto* which control the flow of chakra within the body; another example is Byakugan, a dōjutsu[2], which allows the user to see all the chakra points in the body as well as the flow of chakra. Within *Naruto*, Chakra is said to have five natures, which are derived from the Hindu/Buddhist concept of the five elements, or basic materials or forces that make up the universe: Earth, Fire, Air, Water and Lighting. Lighting is loosely translated as 'Sky' or 'Void' through kanji but serves as an accepted alternative. Together they are known as the 'Godai' or great five and are often depicted as Gorintō (five-ringed tower), a Japanese type of Buddhist pagoda, common in Buddhist temple and cemeteries, where each ring represents an element (Earth at the bottom to Lightning/Void at the top). According to Hinduism, Pancha Bhoota (five great elements) is a group of five basic elements, considered to be the basis of all cosmic creation. These elements are: Prithvi/Bhudevi (Earth), Apas/Varuna/Jal (Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air) and Akasha/Dyaus/Aether (Space). In Yoga, the seven chakras in the human body are associated with these five elements. The five elements in Naruto are, without a doubt, the representation of the yogic philosophy. The ability to control Chakra is governed with the use of hand seals which again is routed in Buddhist tradition. The use of proscribed hand position 'mudras' is both a Hindu and Buddhist practice, and has both symbolic and practical purpose; they are used to aid one in meditation, and in some cases actually hold one's muscles and chest in a position to regulate breathing and focus concentration. They also are used in Hindu and Buddhist art for images of deities where the symbolic nature of the seal is important, either in a position that represents an important action from scripture/legend or as a sort of supernatural power, such as the "wish granting" mudra. Many martial arts also incorporated mudras into their stances. Clearly, this has been incorporated into Naruto as a method to focus chakra and perform Jutsus, which fits very well with the symbolic, supernatural, and physical uses of mudras. In Hinduism, Hasta Mudra or hand posture is based on the panch bhootas. The basic assumption is that all the five elements can be represented by five different fingers in a human body. Angustha (Thumb), Tarjani (Index Finger), Madhyama (Middle Finger), Anamika (Ring Finger) and Kanishthika (Little Finger) represent the elements – Agni, Vayu, Akash, Prithvi and Jal, respectively (Sharma). The twelve animals in hand seals in the series are based on the Chinese zodiac – Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. Each of these are associated with the five elements and yin/yang force.

The Rinnegan (Samsara Eye) is the most powerful dōjutsu in Naruto. It is characterised by concentric circles covering the eyeball. Rinne is the Japanese term for "Samsara", the concept of rebirth and cyclicality of all life and matter in Indian religions. The doctrine of Samsara is tied to the karma theory of Indian religions, and the liberation from samsara has been at the core of the spiritual quest of Indian traditions. The liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth is called Moksha or Nirvana. The user of Rinnegan has access to various paths (six/seven), each with unique characteristics. The six paths in anime/manga are just like realms (McClelland) of rebirth and existence in Buddhism: deva (god/heavenly), demi-gods (asura/titan), human (manusya), animal (tiryag), hungry ghost (preta) and hell (naraka). The abilities of each path granted to the owner of the Rinnegan, matches with the nature of these paths in Buddhism/Hinduism. The Animal path can summon animals, Asuras in mythology had the ability to use Astra (magical equivalents to modern day biological missiles), the Asura Path (just like mythological asuras) can have two additional heads and four additional arms; it is also able to fire missiles and other projectiles. The Deva Path has the ability to manipulate attractive and repulsive forces with objects and people. The Naraka Path has the ability to summon the King of Hell; Naraka in Sanskrit means hell and its king (Yama) presides over life and death, which is well represented in the series through the powers of this path. The Human Path grants a Rinnegan user the ability to read the mind of any target by placing his hand on the target's body and provides slight control over its soul. The Preta Path grants the user the ability to absorb chakra in any form. Mythically, pretas are perpetually hungry and thirsty, which coincides with the ability of the preta path in the series. The Outer Path is an ability granted to wielders of the Rinnegan, which bestows them the power to control life and death. With this power, the user is even able to revive the dead. One who wields the Rinnegan is said to exist outside the realm of life and death. They are regarded as the seventh path, the Outer Path, and wield the power to control life and death itself. The concept of the seventh path is derived from the Sanskrit "Tīrthika", which refers to any doctrine which "treads the outer path" to enlightenment. This is opposed to the teachings of orthodox Buddhism, the Naidō (Inner Path), and is thus considered misguided and heretical. Hindu mythology is a recurring source of inspiration for Kishimoto and other mangakas. Hagoromo Ōtsutsuki, also known as 'Sage of the six paths' is a legendary god-like figure in Narutoverse, who is regarded as the ancestor of shinobi. Like a sage, he laid down principles of ninshū[3] and was the first one to understand and teach chakra control to the general populace. Hagoromo's ultimate wish was to establish peace across the world, but it was a goal that would never be achieved in a single lifetime. Knowing this, he chose to entrust his dream and legacy to his two sons (Indra and Ashura) and began to teach them ninshū. The rivalry of Indra and Ashura Ōtsutsuki and their descendants (Uchiha and

Senju) is derived from Hindu and Buddhist religions where the Gods, led by Indra, are in constant battle against the Asuras. In the teachings, Asuras were malevolent, and Indra was benevolent. In the series, however, the brothers' roles are reversed. The reincarnations of Indra and Ashura are always fated to battle which is evident from the rivalry of Madara and Hashirama as well as that of Sasuke and Naruto. The character designs of Indra and Ashura also stay true to the mythological beings they are derived from. Another resemblance is Hagoromo, who is the father of Ashura and Indra. In Hindu mythology, Kashyapa is an ancient sage who is father of devas and ashuras. Deidara, a ninja from Iwagakure (Stone village), is often observed upon a clay bird. His fearsome technique – 'C4 Karura', is named after Karura, a divine creature with human torso and birdlike head in Japanese mythology. The name is a transliteration of Garuda from Hindu mythology. Garuda feeds on serpent, which was symbolically depicted in the series in the battle of Deidara and Sasuke (Orochimaru's apprentice). Welcoming Approach: Thousand-Armed Murder is the ultimate technique of the Fire Temple that is taught only to its ninja monks. The technique is activated when the user takes a specific stance with their left hand making a half-ram (Chinese zodiac sign- hand seal) and then extending their right hand down with their palm parallel to the ground. Once the stance is taken, a spirit/deity with multiple (1000) arms is summoned to defend the user or attack their enemies. The spirit is normally calm, angelic and looks peaceful. However, whenever the user gets angry, the spirit turns red and transforms into a demonic-looking creature and attacks the user's target with its one thousand fists. The design of the deity is a reference to Bodhisattva and goddess Durga of Hindu mythology. The lotus near the feet of the deity is a symbolic identity to other forms of Durga – 'Laxmi' and 'Saraswati'. Indra's Arrow is Sasuke Uchiha's strongest offensive technique. Sasuke is the reincarnation of Indra. This technique draws influence from Hinduism, where Indra, the god of thunder and war, used a rainbow as a bow to fire arrows made of lightning; the thunderbolt is also said to be given the name Vajra, which is synonymous with diamond or adamantine in a Japanese context. Another reference to Indra is through Senju clan's symbol, which resembles a Vajra, both a symbol and a ritual object present in Buddhism and Hinduism. As a symbol, it represents both indestructible and irresistible force. Other anime series also have made frequent use of vajra (Indra) for lightning symbolism. They could have used any other symbolism related to lightning gods of various mythologies, like Zeus (Greek) or Thor (Norse), which are popularly portrayed in media. The preference for Indian mythology and appreciation of Indian culture is highly suggestive of the inspiration it provides to Japanese artists. Media in other countries have also portrayed Indian gods but there has been a dearth of serious and detailed presentation. Inclusion of major Vedic deities in anime like Agni, Rudra, Dyaus Pita and Prithvi Mata, which have been underrepresented even in Indian media, shows the level of attention to details paid to represent a particular culture.

"Bodhisattva" has often been portrayed in anime, with two most common example being *Naruto* and *Hunter x Hunter*. In *Hunter x Hunter*, Netero's nen ability (aura) "100-Type Guanyin Bodhisattva" is a direct reference. Hashirama Senju from *Naruto* is a user of the technique - Sage Art Wood Release: True Several Thousand Hands (Shinsu Senju). This technique creates a colossal wooden statue with multiple hands that can be freely controlled by the user. The form of the statue itself is the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, a bodhisattva who has a thousand arms to help all those who are suffering. In Naruto and some other anime, characters have been depicted with a "third-eye", which has been associated with enlightenment and higher consciousness in Hinduism and Buddhism. Influences of Indian mythology and spiritualism is clearly visible in majority of anime/manga series. *A Certain Magical Index* features "Astra" of Indian mythology, which are powerful supernatural weapons. The series features – Agni Astra with flame powers (Agni is the god of fire), numerous Shiva Astra (Trishula, Pinaka), Brahma Astra and other weapons. All the depictions are fairly accurate as far as mythological portrayal is concerned.

Anime, as a medium, has also featured the lesser-known mythological figures like Yama, Garuda and Yaksha. In Indian mythology, Yama is a deity associated with death, whose role is to serve as the judge of the underworld. According to Indian folklore, whenever a person dies, he is judged on the basis of the deeds he has done as a mortal and is subsequently rewarded (heaven) or punished (hell). *Yu Yu Hakusho* has a character called "King Enma" who is the king of the Spirit World, the underworld equivalent in the anime. In *Hōzuki no Reitetsu*, there is also a King Enma (Enma Daio), who is the king of hell and functions as the head judge for retribution. Similarly, "King Yemma" of *Dragon Ball Z* administers an office where all the souls of the dead are lined up and he gives out the judgement. He is characterized by two pointy horns just like the mythical Yamaraja. The Kais in the series are based on Dikpala (guardians of directions), and their purpose is similar as they act as the guardians of different realms which are divided according to the cardinal directions. "Judge Vinsmoke" is characterized after the mythical figure – Garuda. In the anime *One Piece*, he is the head of the Vinsmoke family, and ruler of Germa, the Science Kingdom. He also goes by the name "Garuda", the mythical human-bird hybrid. According to the lore, Garuda is the first bird in existence, and by extension, the ruler of all avian creatures. He is the mount of "Vishnu", one of the most important Gods in the triumvirate (that

includes Brahma and Shiva). Garuda is said to be so powerful that the slightest flutter of his wings can prevent the earth, heaven, and hell from spinning about their axes. The portrayal of Garudamon, who is said to be the king of all bird-Digimon, is given the deity treatment just like the mythical creature it symbolizes. The concept of 'Devil Fruits' clearly represent the undeniable role of folklore. Devil Fruits are emblematic and esoteric fruits found throughout the world (of One Piece) that, when consumed, grant the eater a special power, at the cost of the eater's ability to swim. Devil Fruits are said to be incarnations of the sea devil himself, and as a result, Devil Fruit users cannot swim in sea water, as "they are hated by the sea". When even partially submerged in sea water, they lose all their strength and coordination, rendering the users unable to use their powers. When a Devil Fruit user dies, the powers reincarnate into a new Devil Fruit. The rumour about 'Devil Fruits' housing actual devils is similar to the Hindu belief about Beleric, due to which the Hindus of Northern India avoid these trees and will not sit in their shade (Dymock, Warden and Hooper 5). However, Beleric fruit is also known for its medicinal properties and is used by Hindu physicians for various ailments. The other part of rumour about the fruit's devil tearing out and killing the consumer from within is based on South Indian folklore, particularly the version in Villivakkam, about two rakshasa (demon) brothers: Vatapi would take the shape of a fruit or meat and Ilvala would offer the "food" to innocent mendicants passing by. Vatapi would come out by tearing through the victim's body. Paradoxically, modern Indian media doesn't exhibit such a detailed characterization. Even in religious channels, the focus is on major gods and this way a figment of culture is lost, which anime helps to bring back. The remarkable quality of legends is that they never die. They continue to exist in one form or another. In the ancient Indian epic *Mahabharata*, Karna is one of the major characters. He is a demigod of royal birth, for he is the son of the sun god "Surya" and princess "Kunti" (McGrath 1). *Fate/Apocrypha* has tuned Karna quite true to the Mahabharata legend. He is known as the Lancer of Red, which symbolizes his association with the Sun. The lancer sports golden 'Kavacha' and 'Kundala' that renders him invulnerable. His weapons include the holy spear 'Vasavi Shakti' and the explosive projectile 'Brahmastra Kundala'. All these similarities with creative representation of anime clearly pay homage to the culture of India.

The impressive aspect about the immortality of characters is - they change forms but the core concept, their characteristics/traits remain the same. Sun Wukong of medieval Chinese literature is inspired by Hanuman of Hindu epic – Ramayana, who in turn, has inspired many other characters in various forms of media. The anime characters - Monkey King (Naruto), Son Goku (Dragon Ball), and Monkey D. Luffy (One Piece) are some common examples for such cross-cultural inspirations. Taking inspiration from mythologies of various religions not only promotes harmony through the readership/viewership of the combined art but also promotes cross cultural integration of art forms or media adaptations.

East vs West: Cultural Differences or Hegemony

When it comes to representation of a different culture, very few mediums do justice to the various aspects of assimilating that particular culture through works of art/creative media. Provided the creative nature of anime and much more liberty to deviate from actuality, they excel in representing Indian culture in an undulating manner as compared to Hollywood films and the popular American television programs.

In *Stardust Crusaders*, when the protagonists visit the city of Kolkata in India, they are surprised by its state. The representation is close to reality. As the story is set in late 1980s, it does not differ from economic crisis/depression of early 1990s. Even the cities of Kolkata and Varanasi were called Calcutta and Benares respectively, which stands correct according to historical accuracy. When the story gradually shifts to regions of Pakistan, Joseph Joestar (one of the protagonists), uses "As-Salaam-Alaikum" to greet the locals. Such instances show the attention to details paid by Japanese artists whenever they depict other cultures in their works.

Culture plays a significant role in how various media portray deities. Ganesha is a one of the deities frequently depicted in media as a religious symbol of India. The way eastern media portray the deity is remarkably different from its portrayal in western media. In *Danmachi*, Ganesha is portrayed as a god who sometimes serves as a comic relief due to the nature of the series, but the details adhere to the original religious beliefs. *Tekkonkinkreet* also depicts Ganesha in a beautiful manner. In a stark contrast, Indian deities' portrayal is controversial in western media. One of the important factors accounting for a controversial and demeaning portrayal is being unaware of foreign culture and subsequent commercialization without proper research. Hindu gods have been frequently depicted on footwears and bottles of alcoholic beverages. In 2010, Converse launched sneakers depicting Jimi Hendrix as a Hindu deity. Ganesha sandals by American Eagle Outfitters is another example of insensitive commercialization. Ganesha, Laxmi and other Indian deities have been frequently labelled on alcoholic bottles (Australian brewery juxtaposes Ganesha's face, Lakshmi's body on beer bottle). Indian deities have also been decorated on toilet walls, akin to what one observes in temples

(Indian woman slams US pub for Hindu gods on toilet walls. This is the response she got). Such a vile treatment of gods (Indian gods in particular) speaks volumes about the perception of foreign culture, which echoes through the media representation. Engstrom and Valenzano III (2014) discuss how hegemonical representation of "other" cultures has become "normal" in contemporary times:

"Because media mirrors cultural views, the intersection of religion and television becomes an ideal site to examine hegemonic notions about religion. In order for hegemony to continue, it needs something to compare itself to: alternative ideologies that threaten the ones that have come to be accepted as common sense. Thus, it allows for inclusion, even if symbolic and temporary, of other worldviews." (Engstorm and Valenzano III 15-16)

They have provided ample examples to support this view. For instance, *The Matrix*, with its Christ allegory represents cultural hegemony of Christianity in science fiction films. In case of television series, they provide the example of *Supernatural*, stating:

"Supernatural presents religious beliefs and traditions from ancient times as existing, at least in some form, in the present day, with Christianity holding a higher status in terms of power to both preserve and eradicate the world. This becomes evident in episodes in which the God of Judeo-Christian tradition has usurped ancient paganism. Several episodes over the course of the series have the Winchesters actually vanquishing pagan and other gods who reveal themselves in human form. The appropriation of holidays from pre-Christian era celebrated today as Christmas, Easter, and Halloween become ways to educate audiences about their origin as well as imply that the ancient gods associated with their practices no longer have any power." (Engstrom and Valenzano III 46)

Western media makes frequent use of yellow filter when they depict countries stereotyped as impoverished, polluted, and tropical. It contrasts with films set in the West, which often show tinges of blue or green.

"It turns out that it is a common problem - many Hollywood directors habitually use the same yellow colour palette to dramatize stories taking place in Latin America, Africa and South Asia, a practice that visually casts these places as universally warm, hot, dry and dusty. But how does this work, when places such as Mexico City, Kigali, Mumbai or the Bangladeshi coast are not even close to being deserts?" (Yellow Filter: A Cinematic Technique or Pushing Stereotypes?)

Extraction, *The Darjeeling Limited* and *Slumdog Millionaire* are some (un)popular examples of films getting the yellow filter treatment. It is quite disappointing considering the geographical diversity of a country like India, which encompasses hills, beaches, plateaus, plains, deserts, and rainforests. Stereotyping developing countries as "Third World" nations in 21st century is quite inaccurate. Any nation comprises of both prosperous regions (e.g., metro cities) and slums, however, often depicting the whole nation or sub-continent in contemporary setting as impoverished areas full of slums does not adhere to the reality.

Additionally, the diversely beautiful skin colours found in the Indian population is stereotyped to tan/brown only which is a generalization of a different reality often found in the Western media. Anime has broken this hegemonic portrayal by including fair Indian characters as well. Urmina and Narain (D.Gray-Man) are Indian characters with different eye colour, hair and skin-tone. It's not only visual representation that differs when comparing portrayal of Indian civilization in anime and popular western media. The use of chants and musical instruments like flutes is common in anime unlike most of the Western media. Hence, the ambience is captured better when depicting another culture.

Conclusion: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

When we look at a piece of art, not only do we recognize object categories and scene category, but also infer various aesthetic, cultural and historical aspects. Finding influences and understanding the message an artist wants to convey through the medium is a sophisticated but important process. It helps in comparative study of society, culture and mythology. Through cross-cultural references, one can analyse how one form of media can influence another artist's work transcending the boundaries. If done properly, depicting other cultures in various forms of media not only shows appreciation for these cultures but also helps the culture to resolve social issues and survive through time.

"Manga and anime are important media in the construction and dissemination of philosophical ideas concerning society, religion, and science, especially in post-war Japan" (35). Godart mentions how Tezuka wrote a manga series on the life of the Buddha, which, similar to his own experience, depicts the Buddha as gaining an insight into the transmigration to - and from - a core of life at the centre of reality. He further states that the religio-philosophical contents, and the language Tezuka used to express his ideas, were not only a direct product of trauma[4] but can also be understood as part of a larger history of twentieth-century Japanese thinking about biology, life, and religion. The idea of representing philosophy and society in anime and manga are completely different from most of western television series and comics. The products of Western media

are inclined towards commercialization of stereotypical entertainment and rarely deal with artists' philosophical views, cultural significance, and social issues.

American media are shaping the cultures and identities of other nations. American styles in fashion and food, prejudices, as well as media practices, dominate the global market. Local cultures are dying in the face of cultural imperialism imposed through American mass media. Even European cinema has suffered significantly as Hollywood has taken over as a medium of representation of various cultures. There has been a phenomenal growth in viewership of Japanese anime (readership in case of manga), especially in 21st century. One of the reasons behind this rapid growth is how they portray various cultures around the world in a creative yet accurate manner. Bollywood is one of the largest film industries in the world, yet it gets low recognition in western media. Various anime series do include Bollywood references, subtly challenging the dominance of Hollywood as well as promoting cultural integrity.

Unlike the basis of popular Western television shows, anime creators indulge in thorough scrutiny. Yugo Sako had religious upbringing like a priest. He also majored in religious studies. It is clear-cut that most of Japanese artists don't just make anime to capitalize it although sometimes misunderstandings occur.

"The idea of the film came to Japanese director Yugo Sako when he was working on the documentary "The Ramayana Relics" in 1983, which looked at the excavation conducted by Indian archaeologist Dr BB Lal near Allahabad. Sago was drawn to the spiritual themes of the epic and is said to have read at least ten different versions in Japanese.

Feeling that a live action film could not do justice to the mythological tale, Sako decided to take the animation route and collaborated with legendary Indian animator Ram Mohan. "Because Rama is a God, I felt it was best to depict him in animation, rather than by an actor," Sako said in an interview." (Protests by VHP activists meant that this gorgeous animated 'Ramayana' never got an Indian release)

Made as a part of the 40th anniversary of India-Japan diplomatic relations, the anime ultimately suffered the whiplash of time as the Ayodhya dispute[5] took place in the concurrence of its release. The prejudice in India towards animation as children-only medium and the socio-political aspects of Indian religion also contributed significantly to be a hindrance to the anime's release at that time. Since then, there have been numerous releases of anime in India depicting the Indian deities without any dispute.

Although anime as a medium has sometimes been controversial while depicting Indian deities and culture, the Western media has failed in many aspects while representing the Indian culture. American TV shows like *The Simpsons*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Xena: Warrior Princess* have always been in controversies for portraying the cultural and religious beliefs of the Indian sub-continent improperly. Hollywood films always stick to the stereotypes and do not focus on the diversity. The depiction of other countries which have much better infrastructure in present times are also portrayed like they used to be in days of yore. The yellow filter has proven to be a horrendous issue in establishing the image of the Indian sub-continent through western popular culture.

Even video games have been severely criticized for controversial representation of Indian deities. *SMITE* by Georgia based developer "Hi-Rez Studios" was surrounded by controversies regarding Hindu gods. Rajan Zed, President of Universal Society of Hinduism, argued about the repsentation of gods in video games,which was backed by many other religious groups, such as Catholics, Jews and Buddhists as they came out in support of the Hindus who were upset with the game. Zed had called the portrayal "pornographic style".

"Video game makers should be more sensitive while handling faith-related subjects and no faith, larger or smaller, should be trampled. As these games left lasting impact on the minds of highly impressionable children, teens and other young people; such inappropriate depictions would create more misunderstandings about Hinduism, which was already a highly misunderstood religion in the West," Zed's official press statement reads." (Doke)

Zed further stated that reimagining Hindu scriptures and deities for commercial or other agenda was not okay as it hurt the devotees.He also pointed out that he wanted to see producers "taking it seriously and respectfully and not for refashioning Hinduism concepts and symbols for mercantile greed. Hindus would gladly provide genuine entertainment industry seekers the resources they needed for their study and research regarding Hinduism."

Zed also criticized *Overwatch* for a skin for the playable character Symmetra. The skin titled "Devi", which means "Goddess" in Indian culture, transforms Symmetra into something similar to the Hindu Goddess Kali. In the game, Devi-Symmetra is depicted with blue skin, Indian attire and a set of poses that resemble traditional depictions of the Hindu Goddesses.

Both anime and video games make use of animation to portray their content yet western video games pale in comparision to Japanese anime while representing the Indian culture in their works. The most subtle reason for anime as a suitable medium for portraying Indian culture can be accounted to the thorough research by Japanese artists as well as an attempt not to diverge farther from the source.

The experience to explore something one is concerned about is always enthralling. There is always a story behind the creation, whether it is about the world or the characters. On the surface, people consider many art forms as a source of mere amusement, but the inspiration and motive behind creation often stay hidden. When one learns about the factors behind the creativity, it makes them appreciate the art (and culture) to an even greater extent. Even after people finish watching a movie/television series, or reading a novel, the character stays on their mind. The values presented by the character continue to inspire the consumer of the media. People can relate their own life with the characters. The characters are 'immortal' as they have continued to exist for generations. King Arthur, Rama and other heroes have continued to exist as they represent some traits like – valour, justice, and honour. They have been transformed into archetypes which continue to inspire artists. The character creation has now become more complex through changes in the society and the evolution of human civilization, and anime has proved to be a great example of how to use artistic creativity without changing the underlying theme. The media we get exposed to plays a vital role in the way we perceive the elements of the world, or at least the subject matter of that particular medium. Western media need to learn from anime the many aspects of representing a foreign culture properly, especially the diverse Indian culture.

References

Australian brewery juxtaposes Ganesha's face, Lakshmi's body on beer bottle. 08 November 2013. 17 July 2021. <https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/australian-brewery-juxtaposes-ganeshas-face-lakshmis-body-on-beer-bottle-649608.html>.

Buck, William. *Ramayana*. University of California Press, 2021.

Campbell, Richard, Christopher R. Martin and Bettina Fabos. "Cultural Imperialism." *Media & culture: Mass communication in a digital age*. 10. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016. 468.

Doke, Shunal. *Religious groups protest game for its depiction of Kali*. 20 July 2012. 17 July 2021. <https://www.firstpost.com/tech/news-analysis/religious-groups-protest-game-for-its-depiction-of-kali-3603945.html>.

Dymock, William, Charles James Hislop Warden and David Hooper. "Terminalia Belerica." *Pharmacographia Indica: A History of the Principal Drugs of Vegetable Origin, Met with in British India (Vol. 2)*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Company, ld, 1891. 5.

Engstorm, Erika and Joseph M. Valenzano III. "Religion, Mass Media, and Supernatural: Introduction." *Television, religion, and supernatural: Hunting monsters, finding gods*. Lexington Books, 2014. 15-16.

Engstrom, Erika and Joseph M. Valenzano III. "Hegemony of Religion." *Television, religion, and supernatural: Hunting monsters, finding gods*. Lexington Books, 2014. 46.

Godart, G. Clinton. "Tezuka Osamu's Circle of Life: Vitalism, Evolution, and Buddhism." *Mechademia* 8 (2013): 35.

Indian woman slams US pub for Hindu gods on toilet walls. This is the response she got. 20 November 2018. 17 July 2021. <https://www.indiatoday.in/trending-news/story/indian-woman-us-pub-hindu-gods-toilet-1391585-2018-11-19>.

Jain, Madhu. *Kapoors: The First Family of Indian Cinema*. Penguin UK, 2009.

Leach, Edmund. *Culture and communication: The logic by which symbols are connected. An introduction to the use of structuralist analysis in social anthropology*. Cambridge University Press, 1976.

McClelland, Norman C. "Kama dhatu." *Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma*. McFarland & Company, Inc, 2010. 136.

McGrath, Kevin. "Chapter One: Introduction." *The Sanskrit Hero: Karṇa in Epic Mahābhārata (Vol. 20)*. Brill, 2004. 1.

Protests by VHP activists meant that this gorgeous animated 'Ramayana' never got an Indian release. 02 April 2017. 17 July 2021. <https://scroll.in/reel/832996/protests-by-vhp-activists-meant-that-this-gorgeous-animated-ramayana-never-got-an-indian-release>.

Sharma, Shiv. "Murdras and Five Elements." *Brilliance of Hinduism (Insight into exclusive traits of Hinduism)*. 1. Diamond Pocket Books Pvt ltd, 2002. 93.

Thompson, Lee. "Assessing the sociology of sport: On Western hegemony and alternative discourses." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 50.4-5 (2015): 617-622.

Yellow Filter: A Cinematic Technique or Pushing Stereotypes? 25 June 2020. 17 July 2021. <https://www.media-diversity.org/yellow-filter-a-cinematic-technique-or-pushing-stereotypes/>.

Conflict of Interest – The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Disclosure - This is to acknowledge that no financial support has been provided to carry out this research.

[1] There are many film industries in India, but Bollywood is the most popular one.

[2] In Narutoverse, dōjutsu are ninja abilities which are sensory in nature.

[3] Early form of ninjustsu (ninja technique).

[4] Osaka bombing of June 1945 and Tezuka's training as a doctor at the university where he witnessed patients dying.

[5] A political, historical, and socio-religious debate in India focused on a plot of land in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, which is regarded among the Hindus to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity Rama.